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*Harvard University
from the Author.*

The Life and Character of Maj. General Putnam.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT A

MEETING OF THE DESCENDANTS

OF

MAJ. GENERAL ISRAEL PUTNAM,

AT

PUTNAM, CONN., OCT. 25, 1855.

BY L. GROSVENOR.

BOSTON:

FARWELL & CO. PRINTERS AND STEREOTYPERS,

NO. 32 CONGRESS STREET.

1855.

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Ch. 2 of the Constitution

PREFATORY NOTE BY THE AUTHOR.

THIS address is printed at the request and expense of the committee appointed to ask its publication ; viz, L. P. Grosvenor, Esq., and Hon. D. P. Tyler, of Connecticut ; Douglass Putnam, Esq., of Ohio ; Judge Chas. S. Dana, of Vermont ; and Waldo W. Putnam, of Mississippi.

It contains some important facts never before published, and which, it is believed, will be useful to some future biographer of Putnam. It affixes dates to important events in Putnam's life, which have hitherto remained dateless in all published biographies. It exposes the ungenerous conduct of Col. Prescott toward Gen. Putnam, in regard to the honors of the 17th of June, 1775 — conduct which has remained too long unnoticed, or, at least, uncensured ; and it demonstrates conclusively, as the author believes, the fact that Putnam was not merely *a* commander, but *the* commander in the battle of Bunker and Breed's Hill.

A D D R E S S .

WE are not among those who pretend a contempt for the accidents of birth, which we believe it is not in the nature of man to feel. He who is not proud of his ancestors, either shows that he has had no ancestors to be proud of, or else that he is a degenerate son. The remembrance of ancestors who were wise, brave, pious or patriotic, is a strong stimulus to honor the name and family. Who does not believe that those in our country, who bear the name and lineage of Winthrop, and Bradford, and Edwards, of Adams and Quincy, and Prescott, of Trumbull, and Jay, and Ellsworth, have been made what they are, in great part, by the influence of memories handed down from generation to generation, those memories having produced the desire and the will to give back to their famous original, all the light they have borrowed?

But, we meet to day fathers and brothers, not to cultivate or to gratify mere family pride, but to see, for once at least, the faces of our kindred, and to give each other the cordial hand of brotherhood. The duties of life have hitherto kept

us too far asunder. Putnam left any of us but little heritage, save his good name, and noble example. All of us know what it is to earn a living by the sweat of brow and brain. The descendants of Putnam belong, as he did, to the working democracy of the land. Doubtless, to-day, this day which will henceforth be marked with a white stone by all whose happiness it is to be here, there are those, and those too among the best of our kin, who are prevented by sheer poverty, from mingling in our joys and congratulations. In our feast to-day, let us not forget to drink the health and prosperity of all the absent ones. Yet a goodly number are here. We come from the banks of the Father of Waters, from the shores of the beautiful Ohio, from the mountains of the North, and the plains of the South. And if, as legends say, the ghosts of the departed are wont to haunt those spots which they loved on earth, we may well believe that the great and joyous spirit of our ancestor hovers around us now, and rejoices in our presence here. We are near Pomfret, which the name of Putnam has long ago rendered world-famous. Nay, we are in the new town which bears his name—a town beautiful for situation, as Jerusalem, with the mountains round about and the glancing waters of Kedron rolling between—in the brisk, clattering, driving village of Putnam, which has just sprung from the loins of old Pomfret and Killingly, like a fast young man, descended from a pair of staid and quiet old fogies, but discarding their names and eating out their substance, and bringing down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

We are near the farm on which Putnam settled in his early manhood — the farm which still bears trees of his planting — the place where he started with his neighbors for the wolf hunt — near the den where he performed the hazardous exploit — near the house where the old soldier slept his last sleep, and fought his last battle — and near the cemetery where reposes all that remains on earth, of him who, though not having seen, we love with filial affection.

But another object, holier than the gratification of self, has called us together — it is to build a mausoleum to Putnam, that shall not be unworthy of his name and fame, or unworthy of us, his descendants and countrymen. Go, ye that have never been to the place of his sepulchre. You will see there, a plain and once neat marble slab, resting on blocks of native granite. That slab has been hammered and battered by the barbarians that have visited it, till it appears as if it had just emerged from the final bombardment of Sebastopol. His family relations and his townsmen have often passed it with a mournful sigh, and wished for some consecrated column or obelisk, enclosed with a railing so high that no Goth or Vandal could penetrate it, and too tough for any unmitigated Yankee to whittle or carry off; and, a year ago, the Legislature of Conn., unwilling that the State should be any longer disgraced by an exhibition like that in the Brooklyn burying-ground, unanimously voted the sum of \$3000 to build a monument to Putnam, on condition that, at least, as large a sum be raised by private subscription or donation.

Now, it is very true that "a great man needs no monument." If he has not left his monument in worthy deeds, not all the marble of Italy and Egypt can immortalize him. It is true, in a special sense, of such a man as Putnam, *coelo tegitur qui non habet urnam*—the high heavens will cover him, if we give him no funeral urn. But we build a monument to Putnam, not to immortalize him, but because he is immortal, and to show that we do not forget departed worth, or withhold any honor in our power, to the memory of the mighty dead.

You will expect me, on this occasion, to give some account of the family, the life, and the character of Putnam—but I shall doubtless be pardoned, if, at this time, I dwell more particularly, though of course not exclusively, on such facts, as do not appear in hitherto published biographies and histories.

John Putnam, the great-grandfather of Gen. Israel, came from England in 1634, and settled in that part of Salem, Mass., now called Danvers. With John, came his three sons, Thomas, Nathaniel and John, and two brothers younger than himself. Israel was the grandson of Thomas and the son of Capt. Joseph Putnam. He was born Jan. 7th, 1718, and was the eleventh of a family of twelve children. His mother's name was Elizabeth Porter. The house in which he first saw the light is still standing, and was lately occupied by Daniel Putnam, grand nephew of Israel. Before he was of age, Israel married Hannah, daughter of

John Pope, of Salém, and in 1739, at the age of 21, removed to Pomfret, Conn.

Authentic records furnish the following facts regarding Putnam's early lineal descendants; but concerning the younger members, and the collateral branches of the family, I have not had time to acquire information, and it is to be hoped that steps will be taken, at this meeting, to have a full genealogy furnished, for the benefit of all interested. The first child of Israel Putnam, named —

Israel, was born Jan. 28, 1740,

David, was born March 10, 1742, and died young,

Hannah, was born Aug. 25, 1744,

Elizabeth, was born March 20, 1747, and died young,

Mehitable, was born Oct. 21, 1749,

Molly, was born May 10, 1753,

Eunice, was born Jan. 10, 1756,

Daniel, was born Nov. 18, 1759,

David, was born Oct. 14, 1761, and died young,

Peter Schuyler, born Dec. 31, 1764.

Putnam's first wife, Hannah, who had borne those ten children, died in 1765. His second wife, Mrs. Deborah Gardiner, of Gardner's Island, he married in 1767; she had no children, and died in 1777, at Putnam's Headquarters, in the Highlands, and was buried in Beverly Robinson's family vault.

Of Putnam's ten children, three, viz: Daniel, Elizabeth, and David, died in youth or infancy, and the remaining

seven, lived to be married, and to increase and multiply mostly after the pattern set them by their worthy parents. Three of these emigrated from the State of Conn. Israel removed with his family to Ohio. Hannah with her family to Vermont, and Peter Schuyler with his family to Williams-town, Mass.

The children of Putnam are all gone—of the grandchildren, eight still live, viz: David Putnam of Marietta, son of Israel, jr., Wm. P. Tyler, of Brooklyn, Conn., son of Mehitabel, L. P. Grosvenor, of Pomfret, Conn., son of Eunice, Mrs. Harriet Grosvenor of Hartford, and Mrs. Emily Brown, of Brooklyn, daughters of Daniel Putnam, and three sons of Peter Schuyler Putnam, in New York and Ohio. All the children of the General, possessed much of his vigor, activity and energy, and his strong sagacious intellect. This is the testimony of friends and neighbors, still living. His grandchildren and great-grand-children are here to-day, and we hope they will speak for themselves, as their great ancestor did, rather by deeds than words.

The town Records of Pomfret contain deeds showing that on the 15th of March 1739, Israel Putnam of Salem, Mass., bought of Governor Jonathan Belcher, of Boston, a tract of land in that part of Pomfret, then known as Mortlake, and now known as Brooklyn. This tract consisted of 514½ acres, and the consideration for it was, £2572 10s., payable in bills of credit on the province of Massachusetts. This was £5 per acre, lawful money. For the payment of this sum, Israel Putnam and Joseph Pope gave bond and mortgage,

and, two years after, viz: on the 13th day of June, 1741, Gov. Belcher released the mortgage, and gave a quitclaim to Israel Putnam. This farm is situated on the summit of the high hill between the villages of Pomfret and Brooklyn; and the present line of separation between these townships, passes through this tract. It is nearly all fertile soil, admirably adapted to cultivation, being level or gently sloping. The first house he built, is not now standing, but the spot where it stood is pointed out. There still lie many of the stones of the old foundation—there is the first well he dug, but covered now with the modern invention of a platform, and chain pump. There is an old pear tree, almost leafless and lifeless from old age, which it is said he planted. It stands about a hundred yards back of the house now occupied by Mr. Benj. Brown. About a quarter of a mile S. E. of this house is another which he built, and in it, is the long, narrow bed-room, ancient and comfortable in its appointments, in which he died. The main road from Pomfret to Brooklyn, passes through the farm, and is planted on both sides, for a long distance, with very aged apple trees, which the old men in this neighborhood affirm were set out by the general. From the time of his arrival in Pomfret, even down to his death, he was as fond of the peaceful pursuits of agriculture and horticulture, as of the excitement of hair breadth escapes in the deadly breach, and by flood and field. He gave great, and, at that time, very unusual attention to the cultivation of fruit trees. His neighbors give him the credit of introducing all the then best varieties into Pomfret

and Brooklyn, and especially, the famous winter apple, the Roxbury Russet, now so abundant here, he is said to have brought with him from Salem, when he first settled in Pomfret.

Putnam's farm is situated about four miles from the village of Pomfret, and three from Brooklyn. It overlooks one of those vast and varied landscapes which are characteristic of this region, and which ought to be celebrated, if they are not, both in prose and poetry. The rapid Quinebaug, river of many falls, lies cradled in the valley, covered with its trailing mantle of snow-white fog. At this picturesque season of the year, the well cultivated fields, now browned with the early frost or gilded with vast pyramids of the glowing pumpkin, (ammunition of the peace-loving New Englander) give abundant tokens of plenty for man and beast. The silent farm houses on every side, tell of the comfort that reigns within. Dark groves of the green and sighing pine, and dense forests of maple, oak and chestnut, color with myriad tints the slopes of the grand old hills, "sublime, but neither bleak nor bare," which bound, with their undulating crests, the distant horizon on every side. Ledges of grey granite, or brown slate, here and there display their uptilted shelves, capped with massive boulders, along the flanks of the hills, or sharply sculptured against the clear, blue sky.

Northwardly, the white steeple of the first church in Pomfret, and the chimnies and windows of its cheerful dwellings, glitter in the sun, while westward, two miles distant, stands a steep craggy hill, whose strata of granitic gneiss,

cleft, and seamed, and tossed about, at the time when the youngest earthquakes had their birth, here open in yawning dens, or jut out their frowning brows, through the wild and matted forest. In this hill's side, in the clefts of these ragged rocks, the famous she-wolf had her winter lair; near it, the overhanging ledge, now called unhappily "Goat Rock," afforded her shelter from the summer's sun and rain. She had but to cross a deep, narrow valley, to feast sumptuously every day upon the finest of Putnam's bleating flocks.

It was in the year 1743, (according to Rev. H. D. Smith of Abington,) that the wolf was tracked to this place and slaughtered. He adds, that John Sharp, of Abington, was the first to arrive at the den, to discover, for the first time, the long sought lurking place of the beast, and to hurry back to give the information to Putnam and the rest of the hunters. It was then 4 years after his removal to Pomfret, and when he was 25 years of age, that he accomplished the feat that made him at once famous. The world-wide reputation for which many men toil through a long life, it was the good fortune of Putnam to acquire in a single day, as unexpectedly to himself as to others.

From this time, pursuing every branch of his calling with all his native ardor and perseverance, his flocks and herds increased around him, and his fields yielded abundance, so that by the time of the opening of the French War in 1755, he had acquired a handsome property, and when he went out at the call of his country, he was enabled to leave his wife and children in a comfortable house, and sufficiently provided

for, in case of his death. He was appointed to a captaincy by the Legislature of Conn., before he had seen a single day's military service, which shows that the "unaccountable popularity" of Gen. Putnam, spoken of by Gen. Dearborn, in 1816, had begun a good while before. But there are those who from certain infirmities of nature, can never learn to account for the popularity of the noble, the brave, and the open-hearted.

Putnam served in every northern campaign, from the opening of the war in 1755, till the capture of Havana in 1762, and the consequent treaty of peace. In this time he rose from the rank of captain to that of colonel. His services upon the lakes — his services on land as a scout and ranger — as captain and staff officer in a score of battles and skirmishes — his self-sacrificing conduct at the burning barracks — his capture and cruel treatment by the Indians — his imprisonment at Montreal and deliverance through the management of Peter Schuyler, his shipwreck on the way to Havana, and his services there, are all too well known to need detail. The dangers he escaped and the sufferings he endured for his king and country, were greater than those of any other American or British officer. He might, indeed, through his whole military service, have made his own the touching language of the Apostle Paul. "In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the

wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness."

In this seven year's war, he formed friendships and intimacies with many British officers, which were unimpaired even by the fierce and deadly combats in which he and they were afterwards engaged against each other. So strange and absurd a trade is war! So inconsistent and unnatural is that strangest and absurdest of all things, a *civil* war! You remember how, just previous to the battle of Bunker and Breed's Hill, he met under the peaceful shade of a flag of truce, Major Moncrief of the British army, and they rushed into each others arms, like affectionate brothers, almost like loving sisters, long parted from each other. You remember how, on that bloody day, when almost all the British officers in front of the rail fence, had been mowed down like the flowers of the field, by the unerring balls of the Connecticut and New Hampshire marksmen, and Major Small was left standing alone, while the deadly rifles and muskets were just levelled at his breast, Putnam exclaimed in the generous agony of a noble spirit, "Spare that man — spare Major Small, for he is dear to me as a brother!" You remember how the British accounts relate, that when Col. Abercrombie of the British army, was borne from the field mortally wounded, he said with his dying breath, to his attendants, "if you take Putnam alive, don't hang him — for he is a brave fellow." These officers were all with Putnam during the French war, they voyaged together to Havana,

assisted together at its capture and occupation, and shared each other's dangers, and toils, and sorrows, in the midst of the appalling pestilence at that place, which so nearly annihilated the army. Major Small, in particular, as I shall have special occasion to show, he dined, supped and lodged with only two years previous to the battle of Bunker Hill.

On the 19th of May, 1765, Putnam made a public profession of his faith in Christ, and united with the Congregational Church in Brooklyn, then under the pastoral care of Rev. Dr. Whitney.

The few Provincial officers and soldiers who survived the expedition to Havana, deputed Gen. Lyman, (Putnam's old friend and commander) to England, to solicit from the crown, a grant of wild land on the Mississippi river, near Natchez. After long delay, the grant was obtained, and Lyman, Putnam and others, in the winter of 1772-3, made a voyage to the river to explore the tract, and make preparations for settling it.

A journal of that voyage, consisting of some forty pages, in the unique and well-known chirography of Gen. Putnam, and believed to be his longest literary production, is now in possession of L. P. Grosvenor of Pomfret.

The vessel in which they sailed passed Hell Gate on the way from Connecticut, on the 20th of December 1772, and arrived in the harbor of New York on the same day. Here they employed themselves in purchasing stores and ammunition till January 10, 1773, when they took their departure. On the 30th of January, they came to anchor in one of the

harbors of Hispaniola. On the 8th of February, they anchored in Montego Bay, in the island of Jamaica. Here I quote from the manuscript:

"We went out on the plantations, which are some of the best on the island, waited on the manager of the plantation, who treated us very handsomely, walked with us, showed us all the works, and the mills to grind the cane, and as we went in, there was a dog attacked the manager, and in the fight, I tumbled into one of the vats that was full of liquor to make rum of — shifted my clothes, and went on board."

On Monday, March 1st, 1773, they made the harbor of Pensacola. Here they waited on the Governor, on the business of the land claim, and Gen. Huldeman, commander of the British forces stationed there, and on the next day, March 2d, dined with Gov. Danforth, Gen. Huldeman, Major Small, and other officers of the army and navy.

Under date of Monday, March 8th, he says: "I dined with the general. I went from the general's, to see Major Small who was not well — stayed there all night." On the 13th, he says, "supped with Major Small — lodged at night."

On three days of the time they remained at Pensacola, they went out hunting, and shot a buck and a turkey.

On the 20th of March, 1773, they made the "Spanish Balize," and commenced their slow sail against the current of the mighty river. The account of their snail-like progress, and their adventures among the alligators, and their visits to the hospitable French settlers on the banks, is continued down to the 28th of March, 1773, when the journal abruptly closes, several leaves of it, doubtless, being lost.

This journal is interesting, for several reasons. It is a history of one little episode of his adventurous life, concerning which nothing has hitherto been published.

The encounter with the savage dog at Montego Bay, so carelessly related, is very characteristic. "Old Put" must have had a large infusion of Irish blood in his veins, though we know not how it got there; but there was never a fight going on, with man or beast, but he must have a fist or a shillelah in it, and be foremost in the fray. He got for his meddling pains, on this occasion, a baptism in a rum vat. Heaven forefend that any of his descendants, either in a dog fight or any other, should fall into any rum vat, but if it must be, let us pray that they may escape as easily as he did, by a mere shifting of the clothes.

But another and more important point is, by this journal, clearly established, viz: his intimate acquaintance and friendship with Major Small — that he dined, supped and lodged with him several times when he was sick, which is the privilege not of strangers, but of the most intimate friends alone — and this only a little more than two years previous to the battle of Bunker and Breed's Hill, on which occasion Putnam saved the life of Small.

One would think that the statement of Small to Trumbull in 1786, and to Major Alex. Garden in 1791, to say nothing of the word of Putnam himself, were enough to establish the fact of the saving of Small's life by Putnam — but for the sake of invalidating Putnam's claim to any of the honors

of Bunker Hill, and particularly for saving the life of his friend on that occasion, it has been asserted that there existed no proof of their being personally acquainted. Even Frothingham, author of that very able, judicious and generally candid work, the "Siege of Boston," speaks of the incident as "wearing too much the air of romance to be implicitly relied upon."

The approach of the war of the Revolution, put a sudden stop to all schemes of colonizing the low lands of the Mississippi, and after the war, and the consequent separation from the mother country, the grant from the crown was not confirmed. Putnam and others petitioned Congress, but they turned a deaf ear. In relation to this matter, Washington writes to Putnam, (2d June 1783).

"I lament that you should feel the ungrateful returns of a country in whose service you have exhausted your bodily health, and expended the vigor of a youthful constitution. I wish however, that your expectations of returning sentiments of liberality may be verified. I have a hope that, they may — but should they not, your career will not be a singular one. Ingratitude has been experienced in all ages, and republics in particular, have ever been famed for the exercise of that unnatural and sordid vice."

But I hasten to speak of Putnam's part in the battle of Bunker and Breed's Hill.

Though, almost from the day of the fight, there had been some discussion upon the point who had the chief command it was not till 1816, or more than forty years after the bat-

tle, that the public began to be favored with evidences of Putnam's unsoldierly conduct on that day. In that year, Gen. Dearborn, who seems to have imagined that he had a "booted mission" to attack the reputation of Gen. Putnam, and to rend off the honored laurels, undertook the task of proving that Putnam was not in the action on Breed's Hill, but that he remained quiet with his whole force on Bunker's Hill, several hundred yards distant. He also said in his account of the battle, "I heard the gallant Col. Prescott observe, after the war, at the table of his Excellency, James Bowdoin, then Governor of this Commonwealth, (i. e. Massachusetts) that he sent three messengers during the battle to Gen. Putnam, requesting him to come forward and take the command, there being no general officer present, and the relative rank of the Colonel not having been settled, but that he received no answer, and his whole conduct was such, both during the action and the retreat, that he ought to have been shot." He also brought witnesses who said that they frequently heard Prescott charge the loss of the battle upon Putnam, who did not bring up reinforcements as agreed. Having thus, summarily cashiered Putnam, and confined Prescott to the redoubt, Dearborn goes on to show that all the glory of the rest of the field, belongs to Stark's regiment, in which he (Dearborn) had the honor to be a captain.

¶ Very naturally, this publication caused great excitement throughout New England. Col. Daniel Putnam published a calm but decisive reply. Daniel Webster followed, in an article in the *North American Review*, in 1818, in which he

states with his usual clearness, the facts, and evidence brought on both sides, and then with his iron logic, demolishes utterly the gaseous fabric of Dearborn. Dearborn then published a defence of his attack upon Putnam. Then, Hon. John Lowell of Boston, took up the pen, and in a series of articles published in the *Columbian Sentinel*, written in the "early pointed style," showed up Dearborn's self-contradictions, the contradictions of his own witnesses, and his numerous errors and falsities—and showing clearly also, what Webster had not done, the fact that Putnam was the commander-in-chief, having the whole superintendence of the battle and all its previous arrangements. Col. Swett of Boston, followed with his account of Bunker Hill Battle, which did full justice to Putnam.

Indeed the rebutting evidence against Dearborn's assertions, and arguments was overwhelming in its abundance and force. Among those who, from all parts of the country, sent in their depositions, or came in person to testify under oath, the foremost were naturally the Connecticut officers and soldiers — those who knew and loved Putnam best — such as Judge Grosvenor, and Bassett, and Allen, and Hill. But here were also veterans from Mass. and N. H. regiments, some even of Stark's own men, who testify distinctly that Putnam was in the beginning, the middle and the end of the action, exercising every function of an active and able commander-in-chief. Bancroft of Tynsborough, Mass. says that he saw the line of defence marked out by Putnam, and then they went to work—others saw him in the action at the

rail fence, at the breastwork, and behind the redoubt — they saw him on horseback amidst the flying balls, when they expected every moment to see him fall from his horse — they saw him dismount from his horse, and point and fire at the enemy, the cannon which he had ordered to be planted in the open space between the rail fence and the breastwork. Kemp, of Stark's regiment, heard him charge the men not to fire till the enemy came close to the works. Bean, of Stark's regiment, deposed that he saw Putnam riding from one end of the line to the other, as far as he could see, giving orders. Barnes, of Stark's regiment, heard him giving orders to Col. Stark, urging him forward with the principal part of his regiment, while he reserved a detachment to fortify Bunker Hill. Several others heard him assigning places to the fresh troops as they arrived on the field. Lyman of Greenfield, Mass., saw Putnam directing the retreat. Miner of Mass., saw him during the retreat, riding through the lines, exhorting the men to form, and give the enemy one shot more before retreating. Several testify that they saw him riding in the rear of his men upon the retreat, waving his sword, and forming them into columns.

• We have the testimony of troops from Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Connecticut, (and these are all that were there,) that he issued orders to them all, at different times. It is clearly proved that he gave orders to Stark, took men from Prescott, and reproved Cols. Gerrish and Poor severely in the most public manner. We have, it seems, Prescott's own word for it, that Putnam took from

the redoubt, where Prescott was stationed, a strong detachment, against the earnest remonstrances of Prescott. Nay, Prescott, it seems, from Dearborn's statement, three several times, requested Putnam to come forward into the redoubt, and take the command, his own relative rank not having been settled. Now, if Prescott knew that he was ordered and authorized to be commander-in-chief whoever else might be in the field, his rank there *was* settled, and it was improper for him to request any one else, three times, to come forward and relieve him of his duties. If, in fact, as Dearborn relates, Prescott did send three urgent requests to Putnam to take the command, it proves clearly that Prescott knew the command was not his; and if indeed Putnam received such requests, and sent no reply, there was good reason for it, inasmuch as he was already exercising the chief command, with all the ability and energy with which God had endowed him, and, therefore, could do no more. Or, if we suppose that Putnam was not exercising the chief command till he received these urgent requests, there is every reason to believe that such requests from such a source, did there and then influence Putnam to assume the command, and to keep it, as he did, to the close of the action. At all events, Putnam was on that day, *aut Cæsar, aut nihil*; and the same facts and depositions that prove that he was not a *nobody*, prove also that he was the *Cæsar* of the hour.

It is the custom with Massachusetts writers to assert that there was no commander-in-chief, but that Prescott commanded in the redoubt, which was the most important post

for, in case of his death. He was appointed to a captaincy by the Legislature of Conn., before he had seen a single day's military service, which shows that the "unaccountable popularity" of Gen. Putnam, spoken of by Gen. Dearborn, in 1816, had begun a good while before. But there are those who from certain infirmities of nature, can never learn to account for the popularity of the noble, the brave, and the open-hearted.

Putnam served in every northern campaign, from the opening of the war in 1755, till the capture of Havana in 1762, and the consequent treaty of peace. In this time he rose from the rank of captain to that of colonel. His services upon the lakes — his services on land as a scout and ranger — as captain and staff officer in a score of battles and skirmishes — his self-sacrificing conduct at the burning barracks — his capture and cruel treatment by the Indians — his imprisonment at Montreal and deliverance through the management of Peter Schuyler, his shipwreck on the way to Havana, and his services there, are all too well known to need detail. The dangers he escaped and the sufferings he endured for his king and country, were greater than those of any other American or British officer. He might, indeed, through his whole military service, have made his own the touching language of the Apostle Paul. "In labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the

wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness."

In this seven year's war, he formed friendships and intimacies with many British officers, which were unimpaired even by the fierce and deadly combats in which he and they were afterwards engaged against each other. So strange and absurd a trade is war! So inconsistent and unnatural is that strangest and absurdest of all things, a *civil* war! You remember how, just previous to the battle of Bunker and Breed's Hill, he met under the peaceful shade of a flag of truce, Major Moncrief of the British army, and they rushed into each others arms, like affectionate brothers, almost like loving sisters, long parted from each other. You remember how, on that bloody day, when almost all the British officers in front of the rail fence, had been mowed down like the flowers of the field, by the unerring balls of the Connecticut and New Hampshire marksmen, and Major Small was left standing alone, while the deadly rifles and muskets were just levelled at his breast, Putnam exclaimed in the generous agony of a noble spirit, "Spare that man — spare Major Small, for he is dear to me as a brother!" You remember how the British accounts relate, that when Col. Abercrombie of the British army, was borne from the field mortally wounded, he said with his dying breath, to his attendants, "if you take Putnam alive, don't hang him — for he is a brave fellow." These officers were all with Putnam during the French war, they voyaged together to Havana,

assisted together at its capture and occupation, and shared each other's dangers, and toils, and sorrows, in the midst of the appalling pestilence at that place, which so nearly annihilated the army. Major Small, in particular, as I shall have special occasion to show, he dined, supped and lodged with only two years previous to the battle of Bunker Hill.

On the 19th of May, 1765, Putnam made a public profession of his faith in Christ, and united with the Congregational Church in Brooklyn, then under the pastoral care of Rev. Dr. Whitney.

The few Provincial officers and soldiers who survived the expedition to Havana, deputed Gen. Lyman, (Putnam's old friend and commander) to England, to solicit from the crown, a grant of wild land on the Mississippi river, near Natchez. After long delay, the grant was obtained, and Lyman, Putnam and others, in the winter of 1772-3, made a voyage to the river to explore the tract, and make preparations for settling it.

A journal of that voyage, consisting of some forty pages, in the unique and well-known chirography of Gen. Putnam, and believed to be his longest literary production, is now in possession of L. P. Grosvenor of Pomfret.

The vessel in which they sailed passed Hell Gate on the way from Connecticut, on the 20th of December 1772, and arrived in the harbor of New York on the same day. Here they employed themselves in purchasing stores and ammunition till January 10, 1773, when they took their departure. On the 30th of January, they came to anchor in one of the

harbors of Hispaniola. On the 8th of February, they anchored in Montego Bay, in the island of Jamaica. Here I quote from the manuscript:

"We went out on the plantations, which are some of the best on the island, waited on the manager of the plantation, who treated us very handsomely, walked with us, showed us all the works, and the mills to grind the cane, and as we went in, there was a dog attacked the manager, and in the fight, I tumbled into one of the vats that was full of liquor to make rum of — shifted my clothes, and went on board."

On Monday, March 1st, 1773, they made the harbor of Pensacola. Here they waited on the Governor, on the business of the land claim, and Gen. Huldeman, commander of the British forces stationed there, and on the next day, March 2d, dined with Gov. Danforth, Gen. Huldeman, Major Small, and other officers of the army and navy.

Under date of Monday, March 8th, he says: "I dined with the general. I went from the general's, to see Major Small who was not well — stayed there all night." On the 13th, he says, "supped with Major Small — lodged at night."

On three days of the time they remained at Pensacola, they went out hunting, and shot a buck and a turkey.

On the 20th of March, 1773, they made the "Spanish Balize," and commenced their slow sail against the current of the mighty river. The account of their snail-like progress, and their adventures among the alligators, and their visits to the hospitable French settlers on the banks, is continued down to the 28th of March, 1773, when the journal abruptly closes, several leaves of it, doubtless, being lost.

the worth of Prescott ! How indignant was he, (according to Gen. Heath,) when some Conn. paper describing the battle, did not even mention Cols. Prescott, Brown, Gardner and Parker. Never was there a particle of envy or jealousy in the composition of Gen. Putnam, and hence we see, at least, one cause for that "unaccountable popularity" spoken of by Dearborn.

If Prescott did use such language, it is very strange that he did, in the hearing of Rev. Dr. Whitney, apply to this same poltroon, Gen. Putnam, for permission to serve under him, when Putnam, after the battle of Bunker Hill, was ordered by Washington, in a certain contingency, to attack Boston. No wonder that his best friends, deny that he ever used such language !

We cannot be sorry for these attacks on the fame of Putnam. Littleness may be injured, even annihilated by malicious calumny—but true greatness and worth will come out all the better for trials. The gold that circulates, is produced not merely by the mine, but by the furnace. What an old English poet says of the effect of tribulation on the heart of the true Christian is true of these attacks upon the fame of Putnam :

Till from the straw, the flail the corn doth beat,
Until the chaff be purged from the wheat,
Yea, till the mill the grain in pieces tear,
The richness of the flour will scarce appear.

The great prominence of Putnam, and the great value of his commanding presence and genius in that battle was not



fully known, and never would have been known to the world, if envy and hatred had not distilled their subtle poison in his track. The bright star of Putnam's fame peeps out sparkling all the brighter from this little bank of summer's mist which endeavored to put out the light of the star, and seems but to have washed its face. If the calumny (for it *is* a calumny to say that he was not in the action,) is to be renewed by Bancroft, we believe it will be received like Dearborn's effort, with the just contempt of the American people. We believe that the fame of Putnam may safely be confided to his country — for no nation cherishes her faithful children with more warmth than America. And if Mr. Bancroft insists on perpetuating this calumny in opposition to the direct and most particular testimony of scores of honest men, who are quite as well worthy of credit as he, we venture to predict, that notwithstanding the unequalled beauty of its rhetoric, his work will be classed by posterity among the cumbrous romances of a past age, rather than with the authentic and credible histories of the present day, to be read and studied; for if concerning a fact where the evidence is so well known and so copious, his narrative is so wide of the truth, what confidence can we have in the rest of his history? Or if such perversion of truth is indeed to be called history, then indeed, if you are ever laid on a sick bed, and desire your children to read something for your amusement or instruction, you may well say with the elder Walpole to his son, “Read me not *history*, for that I *know* is false.”

Immediately after the battle of Bunker and Breed's Hill, Brigadier General Putnam received the commission of major general. To him alone of the four appointed by Congress, did Washington deliver his commission, on account of the dissatisfaction, among the other officers, at these appointments, by which some officers were outranked by their juniors. He served his country with varied success, but always with sincere devotion, till 1779, when he was attacked with palsy, and obliged to return home, where eleven years after, in 1790, at the age of 72, he died. He left by will, about a thousand acres of land, in Pomfret, Brooklyn, and Canterbury, divided between his sons Israel, Daniel and Peter Schuyler, and twelve hundred pounds in money, divided equally among his four daughters — he bequeathed also to his grandson Elisha Avery £150 — also to his son, Peter Schuyler, all his live stock, farming tools and provisions. The will bears date Feb. 25, 1782.

Putnam, in personal appearance, was of medium height, of a strong athletic figure, and in the time of the revolutionary war, rather fleshy, weighing about 200 lbs. His hair was dark, his eyes light blue, his complexion a florid Saxon, and his broad, good-humored face, marked with deep scars, received in his encounters with the French and Indians. A portrait of him, taken in his younger days, when he was a provincial major, gives a rather slim but muscular figure, dressed in scarlet coat and breeches and a light vest, with buff gloves and black cravat. He is described by those now


living, who frequently saw him in his old age, as being very large around the chest, showing what we should expect from his habits, a great amount of the sanguine vital temperament. Even after his final return from the wars, when one side of him was so paralyzed that his right arm clung close and useless to his side, and he had to be assisted to mount his horse, he rode almost every day on horseback, "sitting up as straight as a boy."

Many anecdotes are related of his energy and perseverance in the days of his bodily feebleness. Those who are old now, but boys then, remember, and tell with delight, about the general's spirited bay mare, and the perfect mastery which he maintained over her, bringing her at any time to a dead halt, by shaking the head of his ivory headed cane. He was frequently seen at the houses of his sons and daughters in Brooklyn and Pomfret, and at the raisings and other gatherings and merry makings in the neighborhood. There, seated in some arm chair, promptly brought forward by the young men for his comfort, he leaning like another old patriarch, on the top of his staff, surrounded by a crowd of children and grandchildren, and friends and neighbors, related abundant anecdotes of the olden time, while his happy audience greeted with loud laughter, the outflowings of his ready wit and his kindly and genial humor.

Putnam was a "self made man," so far as that appellation may be applied to any human being. He was not a product of the schools. No schoolmaster or military chieftain could

boast of having made *him*. Like all such men, he possessed individuality and originality, for which he owed no debts, save to nature. It is proof of his uncommon talents, that he acquired a reputation so solid, with the scantiest literary attainments—it is proof of his uncommon worth of character, that with all his ignorance of *belles lettres*, and all his lack of those graces which the dancing master contracts to furnish at so much per head, he was able to maintain such influence and popularity among officers accustomed to figure in the polite circles of society, and possessing the highest scientific attainments. But a pearl is precious, though encased in the roughest shell, and a diamond is a diamond without any polishing from the lapidary.

It is altogether probable that he little valued learning in his boyhood. A youth of his uncommon physical vigor is apt to have too great a flow of animal spirits, to submit cheerfully to confinement to books, or to have any very profound respect for the pedagogue. He likes the school-master much better when he is *abroad*, than when he is mousing round on tiptoe among the school benches. There is every reason to believe that the pecuniary circumstances of his family were sufficient to have given him a good education; had he been disposed to study. But he loved the tangled and howling forest, better than the tame and close trimmed groves of the academy. His handwriting proves clearly, that he left school forever, just after manufacturing with great labor, a few copies of the longest sized “pot-



hooks," and long before he had attained the dignity of "small hand." It is, like himself, remarkable for broad plainness, rather than for clerkly elegance. His spelling, too, is evidently all done on the *phonographic* principle, entirely unhampered by the arbitrary rules of the dictionaries. He was consequently, during all his military life, conscious and ashamed of his ignorance of letters. He carried on all his military correspondence with the aid of amanuenses, that his ignorance might be exposed to the world as little as possible. He took care to impress on all his children the necessity of education, and gave them the best the country afforded. But the *point* and *pith* of his writings and conversation is well known — the letter concerning the spy Palmer is justly celebrated. There is also in possession of Daniel P. Tyler, a reply of Putnam in his own handwriting, to the note of Capt. Zebulon Ingalls, written, it is said, on a drum-head, on the day previous to Bunker Hill Battle, when the troops were mustering in anxious expectation of something eventful. The captain writes thus:

"Honored Colonel—Since I and a great part of the company are not deferred for a long campaign, be pleased to write your advice what we shall do, and you will oblige, your most humble servant,

ZEB. INGALLS."

Under which Putnam writes:

Sir, the people under your command that are willing to stay had best to enlist — those that cannot stay without doing them too much damage, let them return as soon as may be.

IS. PUTNAM.

The character of Putnam has been truly described by Col. Humphreys, Dr. Dwight, Dr. Whitney, Peabody and Washington Irving, and last, but not least, by Holliston in his History of Connecticut—a work whose rapid and fiery eloquence recalls the days when Cicero and Hortensius battled in the forum.

Bancroft thus describes him before he was forty years old, when he was among the stirring scenes of Lakes George and Champlain.

“There was the generous, open-hearted Israel Putnam — a Connecticut Major — of a gentle disposition, brave, incapable of disguise, *fond of glorying*, sincere and artless.”

This is mostly a high eulogium, and it may seem ungrateful to find fault with it. But we must be allowed to repel with some warmth, the charge that he was *fond of glorying* — i. e. boasting of his exploits. We claim that whatever else might be lacking in Putnam’s character, he was every inch a soldier, and a boastful spirit is a very unsoldierly trait. We challenge Bancroft to produce from any living acquaintance of Putnam, or from any dead record that is worthy of credit, any the slightest proof that Putnam was ever a braggart. Here, where he lived, is the place to come and inquire the truth on this point — here it can be learned, that even in his old age, a time when most old soldiers love to “shoulder the crutch and show how fields were won,” he, instead of being a boastful, was a remarkably modest man. An attack upon the character of Putnam, in the Knickerbocker Magazine in 1842, extorted a reply from Judge Paine of the U. S. District Court of Vt., who was Putnam’s neighbor for thirty

years. He says, "he was a modest, unassuming man, and had nothing of the braggadocio about him." He adds that he was "universally considered, by all his neighbors, a man of the strictest truth and veracity."

Some, even of those who seem inclined to do justice to Putnam, have denied to him the character of a great general. The term "great general" is very indefinite, and suggests a comparison with greater men than this country has ever produced — but if it is intended to assert that Putnam was not a great general in comparison with the majority of our own revolutionary officers, we insist that facts prove the contrary.

Jared Sparks, in a letter written to myself in January, 1844, says — "that he (Putnam) never made mistakes, I would not say, for it cannot be said of a single officer of the Revolution, but I am sure, it may be safely affirmed, that there was not among all the patriots of the Revolution, a braver man, or one more true to the interests of his country, or of more generous and noble spirit." His moral and religious character is thus described in his funeral sermon, by Rev. Dr. Whitney, who was his pastor for 34 years.

"He was of a kind, benevolent disposition, pitiful to the distressed, charitable to the needy, and ready to assist all who wanted his help. In his family he was the tender affectionate husband, the provident father, an example of industry and close application to business. He was a constant attendant upon the public worship of God, from his youth up. He brought his family with him when he came to worship the Lord. He was not ashamed of family religion. His house was a house of prayer. For many years, he was

a professor of religion. There is one, at least, to whom he freely disclosed the workings of his mind — his conviction of sin — his grief for it — his dependence on God, through the Redeemer for pardon — and his hope of a future happy existence, whenever his strength and heart should fail him.”

Putnam was a friend of temperance, and in advance of the age in which he lived. His letter to the Windham County Court, on the subject of granting licenses for public houses, is a frank and laudable effort to stop the current of dissipation which these houses, at that time, were assisting to spread over the land.

I cannot do better in closing my address, than to quote the spirited and appropriate words of Holliston :

“The character of Putnam was the result of our peculiar structure of society, and the growth of our soil. A hero from his cradle, he needed not the tactics of the schools to give him discipline, nor the maxims of philosophy to make him brave. Like the ghost of Fingal rising in the midst of its hill, and unveiling its features to the moon, the fame of our chieftain is just beginning to unfold itself in its colossal proportions. Already, the eyes of the world are turned towards him. A monument is soon to stand above his grave that will be worthy of the spot. Let it be made of material solid as his integrity, and planted deep and immovable as the love that he bore to his country was seated in his heart, yet let it be costly and rare as the lavish gifts that the creating hand poured so plentifully upon him. Let it be simple and bold like his character, above all let it transmit the epitaph

that has so long told the pilgrims who visit the tomb, that 'Putnam dared to lead, where any dared to follow.'"

Friends and brethren! It is for us to obey these exhortations, and to build, as expressed in the call, a *suitable* monument. Let it stand in some suitable place, but always above or near his remains; and especially, let the noble inscription of Dwight be perpetuated upon whatsoever we build; or surely no one now on earth was so well acquainted with him as he, and no one could write an epitaph so true, so classical, or so comprehensive.

It is good that our country should remember thus its worthies. They are gone and their places are not filled. The giants of our country were all produced in the last century. We have our local great men, and sectional great men, but no *national* great man — not one!

There is no Washington now, to whisper with overawing majesty to the warring elements, "Peace, be still" — no Adams or Jefferson with clear heads and wise counsels to guide the nation out of labyrinthine darkness — no Webster, with power of intellect well styled godlike — no Clay, having *vox canora et suavis*, to persuade and wield a senate at his will — no Jackson even, with iron will and frank manly bearing, so calculated to win the applause and obtain the ready homage of passionate multitudes. Nothing is left us now, but to remember departed greatness, and to honor becomingly departed worth, and to pray God to save us, for he alone can do it, and vain is the help of man.







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